

## **Bill would prohibit cruise-ship dumping**

By Paul Queary  
The Associated Press

OLYMPIA — Cruise ships would face a virtual ban on wastewater dumping in Puget Sound under a bill proposed by a Seattle Democrat.

Seattle has become an increasingly popular cruise-ship port in recent years, with visits jumping from six in 1999 to an estimated 140 this year. Regulating the waste produced by ships that can carry as many as 5,000 passengers and crew members has been the subject of recent laws in Alaska and California, both busy cruise destinations.

In Washington state, the industry and the state Department of Ecology are negotiating a voluntary "memorandum of understanding" on how the ships should behave in Puget Sound.

But environmentalists are calling for stricter regulation, especially after the Norwegian Sun dumped 40 tons of human waste into the Strait of Juan de Fuca in May.

"We need more than memos to protect ourselves," Rep. Mary Lou Dickerson, D-Seattle, said yesterday at a news conference that featured environmental and sport-fishing groups.

Dickerson's bill would prohibit passenger vessels from dumping sewage sludge, oily bilge, untreated sewage and nonsewage wastewater known as gray water — drain water from dishwashing, laundry, showers and sinks. It would also give the Ecology Department power to board ships and test wastewater.

Under the agreement being negotiated with Ecology, treated gray water could be dumped in Puget Sound and the department would be allowed to test only once a season, although the cruise lines would test monthly.

"The legislation that you have before you is tantamount to putting a 'cruise ships not welcome' sign at the entrance of the Strait of Juan de Fuca," Dan Grausz, vice president and general counsel for Seattle-based Holland America Line, told the House Fisheries, Ecology and Parks Committee.

Holland America owns two of the six cruise ships expected to use Seattle as a home port this summer.

"Seattle has the opportunity to become a great cruise-ship port. We have no intention of spoiling Puget Sound," Grausz said.

The industry is already subject to many state and federal clean-water laws, as well as regulation by the U.S. Coast Guard, he said.

However, environmentalists argue that the cruise-ship industry treats the loose and occasional enforcement of federal laws essentially as a cost of doing business.

In 2001, after several high-profile dumping cases, Alaska adopted a landmark law that requires cruise ships to report on their wastewater discharges and comply with state standards while in state waters.

"In 2000, fecal-coliform levels from cruise ships were off the charts," said Alaska state Rep. Beth Kerttula, D-Juneau, one of the sponsors of Alaska's law. "Today, they meet our water-quality standards."

Dickerson's proposal would go further, essentially forcing ships to keep nearly all their wastewater in holding tanks while in Washington waters, Grausz said.

"This is basically a zero-discharge bill," he said after the hearing.

However, he conceded that the restriction is technically feasible because, unlike Alaska, ships typically stay in port in Seattle for only one day.

However, in a one-week voyage, a ship generates about a million gallons of gray water, 210,000 gallons of sewage and 35,000 gallons of oil-contaminated water, according to the Bluewater Network, an environmental group in Seattle. Most of that waste — some treated, some not — goes into the water at some point.

"It's got to go somewhere," Grausz said. "The next place is Canada."